

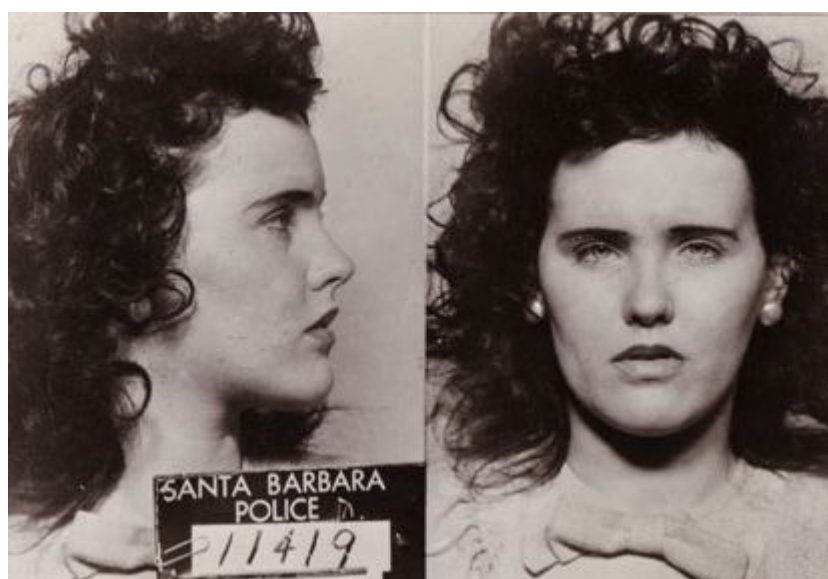
“Our music was far from political or antiwar ... I never felt comfortable with political advocacy.” John Phillips

“There were no political speeches or overt protest songs performed.” John Phillips, discussing the Monterey Pop Festival, of which he was a key organizer

Thus far on this journey, we have seen how what are arguably the two most bloody and notorious mass murders in the history of the City of Angels – the Manson Family murders of the occupants of the home on Cielo Drive in Benedict Canyon, and the so-called Four-On-The-Floor bludgeoning murders of four Laurel Canyon drug dealers on Wonderland Avenue – were directly connected to the Laurel Canyon music scene.

But the city of Los Angeles can boast of one other particularly notorious murder, which stands to this day as both the most gruesome single-victim murder and the most famous unsolved murder in the city’s history.

On January 15, 1947, the mutilated body of aspiring actress Elizabeth Short was found posed in a field. The ritualistically butchered body was nude, sliced cleanly in half, and completely drained of blood. Parts of the body had been removed, after which the corpse had been thoroughly sanitized. Bruising clearly indicated that the young girl had been savagely beaten. Forensic evidence suggested that she had been forced to eat feces during her tortuous ordeal. She was quickly dubbed the ‘Black Dahlia,’ and it is by that name that she is known and written about today.



Elizabeth Short arrest photo from 1943 for underage drinking

Much of what has been written about the brief life of Ms. Short is contradictory. Among the facts that seem to be agreed upon is that she had recently worked at a military facility that is now known as Vandenberg Air Force Base, and that she had some kind of close connection to a US Naval hospital in San Diego, where she may have also worked. That is, in any event, what she had indicated in a letter to her mother.

This murder occurred some twenty years before Laurel Canyon’s glory days. It would seem rather foolish then to suggest that all three of Los Angeles’ most notorious murder cases were connected to the peace-and-love scene flowering in Laurel Canyon in the 1960s and 1970s.

But that is, nevertheless, exactly what I am going to do. It is, admittedly, an indirect connection, and, since the case remains officially unsolved, it is a tentative one as well, but it is a connection nonetheless.

For those who are unfamiliar with the Black Dahlia murder, or who have only read about the case and never actually seen the brutality inflicted upon Ms. Short, please be advised that you are about to see for yourself just how barbaric this crime was. The images are absolutely horrifying – but that is, unfortunately, what elite ritualized crime looks like. You have been warned.

“John [Phillips] was the ultimate controller.” Mamas and the Papas producer/manager Lou Adler

“She was practically his slave.” Michelle Phillips, describing John’s third wife, Genevieve Waite

Our story begins on August 30, 1935, with the birth of John Edmund Andrew Phillips to parents Claude and Edna Phillips. Claude was a retired Marine Corps officer and engineer. His father, John Andrew Phillips, a prominent architect, one day “mysteriously fell to his death” on a construction site, according to John Phillips’ autobiography, Papa John. That kind of thing tends to happen to family members of people associated with Laurel Canyon.

John’s mother, Edna, had what most folks would consider a rather unconventional upbringing. Her mother was a psychic/faith healer, and many of her eleven siblings were well known locally as gunfighters and bandits. When Edna was just a year old, she was – and I am neither making this up nor stealing it from the plot of some hack Hollywood film – purportedly kidnapped by Gypsies! Her father allegedly found her a year later down in Mexico. How he would have done so remains something of a mystery (though I’m guessing that maybe he had some help from Albert DeSalvo’s mother, who supposedly likewise tracked down young Albert after his father had sold him to a farmer as a slave; have I mentioned lately, by the way, that to fully understand the Laurel Canyon story, you really need to read Programmed to Kill?).

Edna was just fifteen when she met and began a relationship with Claude Phillips, who according to legend had supposedly won an Oklahoma bar from a fellow serviceman in a poker game on the way home from France at the close of World War II – which seems about as credible as various other aspects of Phillips family history, as told by John. By eighteen, Edna had given birth to the couple’s first child, Rosie Phillips, born on New Year’s Eve, 1922.

Rosie would later become a career employee of the Pentagon, where John’s first wife, the daughter of an intelligence operative, would also find work. Years later, according to John, Rosie’s daughter Patty would be “found dead of an overdose in a girlfriend’s apartment in North Hollywood ... There were mysterious questions surrounding her death.” As I just noted a few paragraphs back, that kind of thing tends to happen.



Lloyd Wright Mayan Revival House

In the late 1920s, Claude Phillips was commissioned to Haiti, where he remained for four years. He was then sent back to Quantico, then shipped off to Managua, Nicaragua, before finally returning to Alexandria, Virginia, where John Phillips, who would grow up to become arguably the most important music figure in the canyon, grew up and went to school.

John attended a series of strict Catholic and military schools and served as an altar boy. According to his own account though, he also had a darker side, which included forays into vandalism, auto theft, breaking and entering, fighting, and other assorted mischief. His mother, meanwhile, routinely cruised for men – when not spending time with a US Army Colonel named George Lacy. John would later be told that his real father was a US Marine Corps doctor named Roland Meeks, who died in a Japanese POW camp during WWII.

Phillips played basketball at George Washington High School, from where he graduated in 1953. He then scored an appointment to Annapolis Naval Academy, but soon dropped out. One of his first paying jobs was working on a fishing charter boat. As John later recalled it, the crew consisted of him, a retired Navy officer, and four retired Army generals. Seems like a perfect fit for one of the future guiding lights of the hippie movement. Phillips also, for a brief time, tried his hand at selling cemetery plots.

As previously noted, John's first wife was the aristocratic Susie Adams, descendent of President John Adams and occasional practitioner of voodoo. Their first son, Jeffrey, was born on Friday the 13th in December of 1957. Shortly after that, John found himself in, of all

places, Havana, Cuba, just as it was about to fall to the revolutionary forces of Fidel Castro. According to Phillips, he and his traveling companions “were once whisked off the street by a director, straight into a TV studio to appear on a live Havana variety show.”

Many of you, I’m sure, have had a similar experience.



Some months later, in late 1958, Phillips flew to Los Angeles and began performing on amateur nights at Pandora’s Box on the legendary Sunset Strip. His first band, The Journeymen, featured Phillips, Scott McKenzie and Dick Weismann. It was while touring with this formation that John Phillips met a very young Holly Michelle Gilliam.

Michelle was born November 10, 1944 in Long Beach, California, to a father variously described as a merchant mariner, a movie production assistant, and a self-taught intellectual. When Michelle’s mother, a Baptist minister’s daughter, reportedly died of a brain aneurysm when Michelle was just five, Gardner “Gil” Gilliam took his daughters and promptly relocated to Mexico, ostensibly to attend college on the GI Bill. They remained there for several years. Upon their return to Southern California, Gil found work as an LA County probation officer. According to John, Gil’s work “often required him to go out of town,” though one would think that that would make it rather difficult for him to keep tabs on his charges.

In 1958, while future-husband John was vacationing in war-torn Cuba, Michelle found a new mother-figure in twenty-three-year-old Tamar Hodel. Tamar’s father, Dr. George Hodel, was described by Vanity Fair in December 2007 as “the most pathologically decadent man in Los Angeles” and “the city’s venereal-disease czar and a fixture in it’s A-list demimonde.” Also noted in the article was that “George Hodel shared with Man Ray a love for the work of the Marquis de Sade and the belief that the pursuit of personal liberty was worth everything.” In other words, Hodel embraced that all-purpose Luciferian creed, “Do what thou wilt.”

Tamar and her siblings had “grown up in her father’s Hollywood house, which resembled a Mayan temple, was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright’s son, and was the site of wild parties, in which Hodel was sometimes joined by director John Huston and photographer Man Ray.” The luxurious home (pictured here as it looks today) reportedly features, among other amenities, a subterranean walk-in vault, which is always a nice thing to have around.



Within the walls of that singularly odd Hollywood Hills home, which lies about three miles due east of the mouth of Laurel Canyon, Tamar talks of how she “often ‘uncomfortably’ posed nude ... for ‘dirty-old-man’ Man Ray and had once wriggled free from a predatory John Huston.” Her own father, not so shockingly, “had committed incest with her. ‘When I was 11, my father taught me to perform oral sex on him.’” Her father also “plied her with erotic books, grooming her for what he touted as their transcendent union,” and freely shared her with his wealthy and influential friends.



Dr. George Hodel

“To the girl’s horror, she became pregnant” at the tender age of fourteen – with her father’s child. “To her greater horror, she says, ‘my father wanted me to have his baby.’” A friend, nevertheless, took her to get an abortion. Dr. George was so incensed that, according to Tamar, he “struck her on the head with his pistol,” prompting her step-mother (who also happened to be John Huston’s ex-wife) to assist her in going into hiding.

Dr. George Hodel was arrested and charged with, among other things, offering his young daughter to several friends at an orgy. The sensational 1949 incest trial featured a witness who took the stand to describe being hypnotized by Hodel at a party; she also claimed that she had witnessed him attempt to hypnotize other young women.

Allegations that the rich and powerful were dabbling in incest, hypnotism/mind control, pedophilic orgies, and Luciferian philosophies must surely have been shocking to Angelenos in the 1940s, as they would still be to most Americans today, but to these jaded eyes and ears, it just sounds like business as usual. Also sounding like business as usual is that Tamar was roundly vilified by both the press and the defense team (led by Jerry Giesler), and Dr. George Hodel was acquitted.



Far more shocking even than all of that is the then-unknown fact that, even while Hodel was standing trial on the sensational charges, he was, and still is today, a prime suspect in the Black Dahlia murder case! There have been, of course, numerous suspects identified in the case, including actor/director Orson Welles. But George Hodel does seem to be a much more likely suspect than most of those who have been identified. And his possible guilt, needless to say, does not exclude others from likely complicity as well. The mistake that virtually all investigators of this case have made is assuming that there is only one culprit.

The most likely scenario is that Hodel committed the crime in conjunction with various others in his pedophilic, Luciferian social circle. Man Ray, for example, is a compelling suspect, given that the posing of Ms. Short's body appears to mimic *The Minotaur*, one of his better-known photographs. Man Ray, by the way, was something of the Robert Mapplethorpe of his era – the same Robert Mapplethorpe, it should be noted, whom investigative journalist Maury Terry has similarly linked to the Son of Sam case and various other ritualized murders (for more on George Hodel, Man Ray and the Black Dahlia murder, see *Black Dahlia Avenger* by Steve Hodel [George's son and a former LAPD homicide detective] and *Exquisite Corpse* by Mark Nelson and Sarah Hudson Bayliss).



Minotaur: Man Ray

How it is that the fourteen-year-old daughter of a lowly probation officer fell into the orbit of the daughter of the wealthy and influential George Hodel (Hodel's former home is currently valued at \$4.2 million) has never been explained, but Tamar, described by Michelle as "the epitome of glamour," quickly took the youngster under her wing, buying her clothes, enrolling her in modeling school, teaching her to drive, and providing her with a fake ID and a steady stream of prescription drugs – obtained, one would presume, from her father.



According to Michelle, "Tamar put on perfect airs around my dad and when it became necessary she would sleep with him." Whatever works, I guess. That perhaps explains why, in early 1961, Gil didn't have a problem with allowing his underage daughter to move to San Francisco with the daughter of a violent pedophile. Soon enough, Tamar found herself in a relationship with Journeyman Scott McKenzie, and bandmate John Phillips began coming by Tamar and Michelle's room on a nightly basis.

It wasn't long before Michelle, still just seventeen, was romantically involved with twenty-six-year-old Phillips, despite the fact that John was still married to Adams, with whom he by then had two children, Laura MacKenzie Phillips having been born on November 10, 1959 in Alexandria. Father Gil, who had himself recently taken a sixteen-year-old bride (one of a string of six wives), still wasn't concerned. And it's probably safe to assume that Phillip's father, who had pursued his bride when she was just fifteen, wouldn't have been too concerned either.

In October 1962, a year or so after meeting Michelle, John curiously found himself in Jacksonville, Florida (alongside Naval Air Station Jacksonville and Naval Station Mayport) for “two weeks of rest and rehearsal” during the Cuban Missile Crisis. For a guy who “never felt comfortable with political advocacy,” John seems to have had a keen interest in Cuban affairs. Two months later, on New Years Eve 1962, Holly Michelle Gilliam became John Phillip’s second wife. She also joined his reconfigured band, as did Canadian Denny Doherty, who had formerly been with the Mugwumps alongside Cass Elliot. This new lineup was dubbed the New Journeymen.



The newly-formed trio promptly embarked on a curious Caribbean adventure, arriving first at St. Johns, where John has claimed that they “snorkeled on acid” for several weeks. They next ferried over to St. Thomas, where they set up camp at a dive beachfront boardinghouse known as Duffy’s. Soon enough, Ellen Naomi Cohen, better known as Cass Elliot, showed up with John’s nephew, who was a childhood friend of hers. Cass had been born in Baltimore but had grown up in Alexandria, where, like Phillips, she had attended George Washington High School.

As the legend goes, Cass waited tables at the dive while the trio performed folk songs. What they were really doing there remains something of a mystery, though in Papa John, Phillips did drop a clue: “The town was crawling with drunken Marines and sailors on their way home from Vietnam.”

Moving on from the boardinghouse, the group next took over an unfinished home on Creeque Alley, where, according to John, they were known as “the island’s open house and everyone was welcome to our commune.” At some point though the governor supposedly ordered them

off the island “because he thought his nephew was doing drugs with the crazies at Creeque Alley.” The band had formalized its new lineup of John Phillips, Michelle Phillips, Denny Doherty and Cass Elliot, and they had a whole album’s worth of material written. That first album would feature such enduring classics as California Dreamin’, Monday, Monday, and Go Where You Wanna Go. On none of the bands subsequent albums would they produce anywhere near the level of songwriting that they were allegedly able to achieve on that Caribbean adventure.

Though isolated on that Caribbean island, the songs the group brought back to LA with them just happened to be of the soon-to-emerge folk-rock variety. In Papa John, Phillips quotes Doherty as saying that everyone was “evolving toward the same sound at the same time without really communicating with each other about it.” It was, I suppose, just the way things were fated to be – or it could be that everyone was following the same script, written by unseen others.

Before helping to spearhead the folk-rock movement though, the quartet first had to get off the island, which Phillips presents as a high-risk venture: “We tried to get off the island quietly. We split in groups at the airport to look inconspicuous ... We went at night so there wouldn’t be any credit checks done on me.”



Within a month of arriving in LA, the band had a producer/manager (Lou Adler, a Jewish kid who had grown up in a tough, Hispanic section of East LA) and a record deal, and John and Michelle were at home in a comfortable house on Lookout Mountain in Laurel Canyon. They would soon be able to afford to purchase Jeanette McDonald’s former Bel Air mansion at 783 Bel Air Road, which featured “hand-carved wooden gargoyles” and “a walk-in vault beneath the house,” which, as I already mentioned, is a very handy feature. Sitting on five acres, the

lavish home, with five Rolls Royces in the driveway, was the site of virtually nonstop partying.

The new lineup, of course, needed a name, and John pushed hard for the occult-based Magic Circle, which the band was briefly known as before ultimately settling on The Mamas and the Papas. There would be other indications as well that Phillips had a keen interest in the occult. He would later, for example, start his own label and call it Warlock Records. And his third wife, Genevieve Waite, was an avid follower of Aleister Crowley.

The Mamas and the Papas proved to be a rather short-lived band, recording and performing just from 1965 to 1968 (with a brief reunion in 1971 to satisfy contractual obligations to their record company). During that time, the band produced five albums and eleven top 40 singles. To date, the lineup has sold nearly 100,000,000 albums.

The first single, released in 1965, was Go Where You Wanna Go, which failed to chart. Their next release, California Dreamin', shot up to #4. Their freshman album, If You Can Believe Your Eyes and Ears, released in early 1966, rose to the very top of the charts, their only album to do so. Their only #1 single, Monday, Monday, followed the release of the album. It was all downhill from there.



While recording their second album in June 1966, Michelle was discharged from the band due to the fact that she was having an affair with Denny Doherty, which was causing severe friction in the group. By August, she was back, though that didn't prevent the group's second album from performing rather poorly. The third, recorded in 1967 and ironically entitled Deliver, failed to live up to its name. Then in June of that year, The Mamas and the Papas delivered a closing set at the Monterey Pop Festival that almost everyone agrees sucked ass.

It wasn't hard though for the band to score that coveted closing slot, given that Phillips had played a key role in organizing the event. Monterey proved to be, according to Barney

Hoskyns, the “moment when the underground went mainstream.” As Rolling Stone noted in its Fortieth Anniversary Edition, “The plan for a new kind of festival was spearheaded by John Phillips, the leader of the Mamas and the Papas, and Lou Adler, an influential producer and the band’s manager.” Also noted was that the “road to Monterey began with Alan Pariser, a young heir to a paper-manufacturing fortune,” just as the road to Woodstock began with John Roberts, a young heir to a pharmaceutical manufacturing fortune, but that’s another story entirely.

Two months after Monterey, the band made their final television appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show. Two months after that, the quartet headed off to Europe while recording their fourth album, *The Papas and the Mamas*. That album’s first single was the Laurel Canyon-inspired 12:30 (Young Girls are Coming to the Canyon). Shortly thereafter, the band broke up. John tried his hand at a solo career with the wildly unsuccessful result being the release of *The Wolf King of LA*. To satisfy record label demands, the group briefly reformed for their fourth album, *People Like Us*.

Following that unsuccessful venture, the band once again dissolved.